

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, let me explain briefly our situation.

Early this year, the majority leader stated we would take up the Patients' Bill of Rights in June. We applauded that commitment. That is really what this fight is all about—maintaining the commitment that was made earlier.

Democrats have been saying we will do everything humanly possible to ensure that the Senate engages in a full, meaningful debate on the central issues of managed care reform:

Whether doctors or HMO bureaucrats determine what tests or treatments are medically necessary;

Whether you or your child can see a qualified specialist;

Whether patients have access to a timely, independent, external review to appeal HMO decisions to deny care;

Whether HMOs should be held accountable for medical decisions to deny or delay care that injure or even kill patients;

Whether an HMO bureaucrat, or your doctor, decides what prescription drugs you need;

Whether you or your family member can participate in a clinical trial for a potentially life-saving new treatment;

Whether all privately insured Americans deserve protection.

The list goes on and on. Those are some of the issues, some of the questions.

We have tried to reach an agreement with the majority to call up the bill separately. All we have asked is that we be guaranteed votes on those central issues. So far, the majority has refused.

What we have done in the last few days is what we vowed we would have to do: We are offering our proposal as amendments on the floor, as is our right under the Senate rules.

In my view, it is also our obligation to bring to the floor of the Senate the issues that matter most to the American people.

While some have suggested there isn't time for this debate, others have stated quite clearly their real reason for refusing: They do not want to vote on these issues.

Why don't they want to cast these votes? Because they are, frankly, on the wrong side of the issues. They do not want to have to defend their position.

They said they want to get beyond the Feinstein amendment. They can. All they have to do is vote on it. The majority wants to accuse us of holding up the Senate, but nothing is stopping any member of the majority from moving to table the Feinstein amendment.

They can do that tonight. We could have our vote and move on to another amendment. That is all that is required: Table the Feinstein amendment if you do not like it.

But the majority appears not to want to table the amendment. They appear to be afraid to have that vote, afraid to let doctors make medical decisions, afraid to admit they are blocking that patient protection. I have never seen anything like the bob-and-weave tactics that have been employed to date to avoid this vote.

So what are they afraid of? What is wrong with doctors making medical decisions? I believe this is gamesmanship at its worst.

Last week we heard several Republican Senators talk about how good their Patients' Bill of Rights is. Then they voted to strip it from the floor.

Now they are offering the Democratic bill—which they tabled just last week so they could avoid an up-or-down vote on the Feinstein amendment—so they can avoid a vote on whether or not to let doctors and other health care professionals determine what is medically necessary.

Every day the majority makes these decisions, every day they avoid these tough votes, someone's child, someone's parent, someone's spouse is being denied medical care prescribed by a doctor because an insurance company accountant is saying it isn't really necessary or that it costs too much.

Let me make one thing very clear. This dispute isn't about the Senate's time. In the time the majority has spent avoiding a single vote on medical necessity, we could have considered the entire Patients' Bill of Rights amendments. They have turned down every offer we have made to address this issue in an efficient manner. This dispute isn't about time, it is about actual votes on actual rights. We insist on having them—both the votes and the rights. Apparently our colleagues on the other side of the aisle want neither.

Up-or-down votes—isn't that what the Senate is here to do, to vote on the issues that matter the most? If and when the majority is willing to vote on these issues, the Senate can move on. But it is our belief that the Senate should not move on until it has dealt properly with one of the most important issues facing virtually every American—their health care.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ASHCROFT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SERVICE-LEARNING GOES NATIONAL—LEADING SCHOOLS ARE ANNOUNCED

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the Corporation for National Service recently announced the first winners of the National Service-Learning Leader Schools program, a Presidential initiative to recognize outstanding schools for their achievements in the field of service-learning.

Learn and Serve America, one of the three national service programs of the Corporation for National Service, is sponsoring the Leader Schools initiative. In this, its pilot year, the program is honoring 70 high schools in 41 states and the District of Columbia for thoughtfully and effectively integrating community service into the lives of students. The goals of the program are to promote civic responsibility, improve school and student performance, and strengthen local communities.

Four schools from Massachusetts—Drury High School in North Adams, Hudson High School, Phillips Academy, and Sharon High School have been leaders in our state on service-learning, and were honored by this designation. I commend them for the important work that they have accomplished in making community service an integral part of school life. These schools are impressive models for Massachusetts and for the nation.

The Leader Schools program is not simply an awards program. The schools being honored today are also making a two year commitment to help other schools include service-learning in their curriculum.

In May 1996, President Clinton announced his intention to identify and honor the schools that have done the best job of encouraging, organizing, and leading the service-learning movement. He said, "We should make service to the community a part of every high school in America and a part of the life of every dedicated citizen in the United States."

Many of us have seen local service-learning programs in action and the inspiring way that students of all ages respond and work together to improve their communities.

The Corporation for National Service also administers AmeriCorps, the domestic Peace Corps that is engaging over 40,000 Americans in intensive, service activities. In addition, it administers the National Senior Service Corps, which is involving nearly half a million Americans age fifty-five and older to share their time and talents to help solve local problems. These three outstanding programs are all achieving